TWIN CITY LINES
Winter 2019

This is Cedar Avenue looking north at 5th Street in the early 1890s. At right is the landmark Dania Hall, built in 1886. It burned and was demolished in 2000. Horse-drawn streetcars had been here since 1884, and the line was electrified in 1891. Center poles suspended the early overhead wires. Later they were replaced with sidewalk-mounted poles and span wires. For more on the ever-changing West Bank track construction, see page 14. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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No Stop Cars

-Aaron Isaacs

While browsing the online Historic Minneapolis Tribune, I stumbled across a previously unknown TCRT operation, "No Stop" streetcars. Inaugurated in 1916, they were PM rush hour trips from downtown that made no stops between downtown and Lake Street in south Minneapolis or Broadway in north Minneapolis.

In an era of extreme overcrowding, the No Stop cars increased the chances that someone riding farther out could actually get on board, rather than be bypassed. Travel time was not reduced, because cars were scheduled every couple of minutes, so the No Stop car always had to wait behind regular cars that made all the stops. However, once settled in, the passengers didn't have to deal with the jostling that accompanied boarding and alighting.

The idea was tried first with three trips each on the Nicollet and Bryant lines in February 1916. Here's an early newspaper account. "Large crowds of

TWIN CITY LINES

Information About "No Stop" Cars

Giving list of Cars run, their schedules, and the system governing their stops to take on and let off passengers.

LINE	LEAVE	DIRECTION	PASSENGER STOPS MADE		
			To Take on or Let Off	To Take On Only	To Take On or Let Off
OAK & HARRIET	Wash. Ave. 5:30, 6:02 P. M.	West	As far as 8th St.	Between 8th St. and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line.
ROBBINSDALE	Sixth St. 5:56, 6:26 P. M.	North	As far as 2nd Ave. N.	Between 2d Ave. N. and Crystal Lake & Penn Avs	Between Crystal Lake & Penn Avs and Robbinsdale
MONROE & BRYANT	Wash. Ave. 6:01 P. M.	South	As far as 8th St.	Between 8th St. and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line.
54TH ST. & COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	High St. 5:49, 5:59, 6:09 P. M.	South	As far as 8th St.	Between 8th St. and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line.
MARQUETTE & GRAND	High St. 5:40, 5:52, 6:00 P. M.	South	As far as 8th St.	Between 8th St. and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line
MINNEHAHA FALLS	2nd Ave. N. and 3rd St. 5:32, 6:04 P. M.	South	As far as 7 Corners	Between 7 Corners and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line
50TH ST. E. & CAMDEN	Penn. Ave. 5:39, 5:55 P. M.	South	As far as 7 Corners	Between 7 Corners and Lake St.	Between Lake St. and End of Line.

downtown workers craning their necks to see the cars labeled 'No Stop' gave evidence all last week of the success of the plan for 'through' cars on the Nicollet and Bryant avenue lines in the evening rush hours.

The Street Railway company inaugurated the new service, calling for No Stops from 8th Street to Lake Street, for three additional cars last Monday. The first day, many of the 'long riders', those persons living south of Lake Street, took

Front cover: The aftermath of a fender bender between an auto and a northbound 34th Avenue streetcar. This is the notorious corner of Franklin Avenue and Cedar Avenue, where three streetcar lines were frequently delayed by Milwaukee Road trains, which passed diagonally through the intersection. See page 17 for more on Franklin and Cedar. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

advantage of the opportunity to ride in cars that made No Stops.

The second day the crowds nearly doubled and last night the three additional cars went out crowded to the doors.

The time saved by the cars was not appreciable but the satisfaction of riding on a car that went through without a stop made up for it. Instead of three cars in the coming week, there will be four on the Bryant line, representatives of the company announced yesterday."

Passengers on other lines immediately demanded No Stop cars. Within a short time they were added to the Chicago Avenue and Oak-Harriet lines. In April 1916 the Robbinsdale line received No Stop cars, with the longest nonstop section yet, downtown to Broadway and Penn. The same day, April 25, saw No Stops added to Grand Avenue. The Fremont Avenue and Camden lines received No Stop cars in October 1916. These operated a little differently.

For the first year the Nicollet, Bryant and Hennepin cars made no stops between downtown and Lake Street. The Fremont and Camden cars would stop between downtown and Broadway, but only to pick up passengers for Broadway and beyond. In May 1917, the operating rules were made consistent across all the lines, with pickups only in the No Stop zone.

January 2017 brought the first No Stops as far as Lake Street on the Cedar Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue lines.

After 1917 nothing appears in the newspapers to indicate when TCRT eliminated the No Stops. It probably happened as ridership dropped off in the 1920s or 30s.

Duluth Street Railway ran similar No Stop cars on the Woodland and Lester Park lines.

Ed Nelson's load checks

-Aaron Isaacs

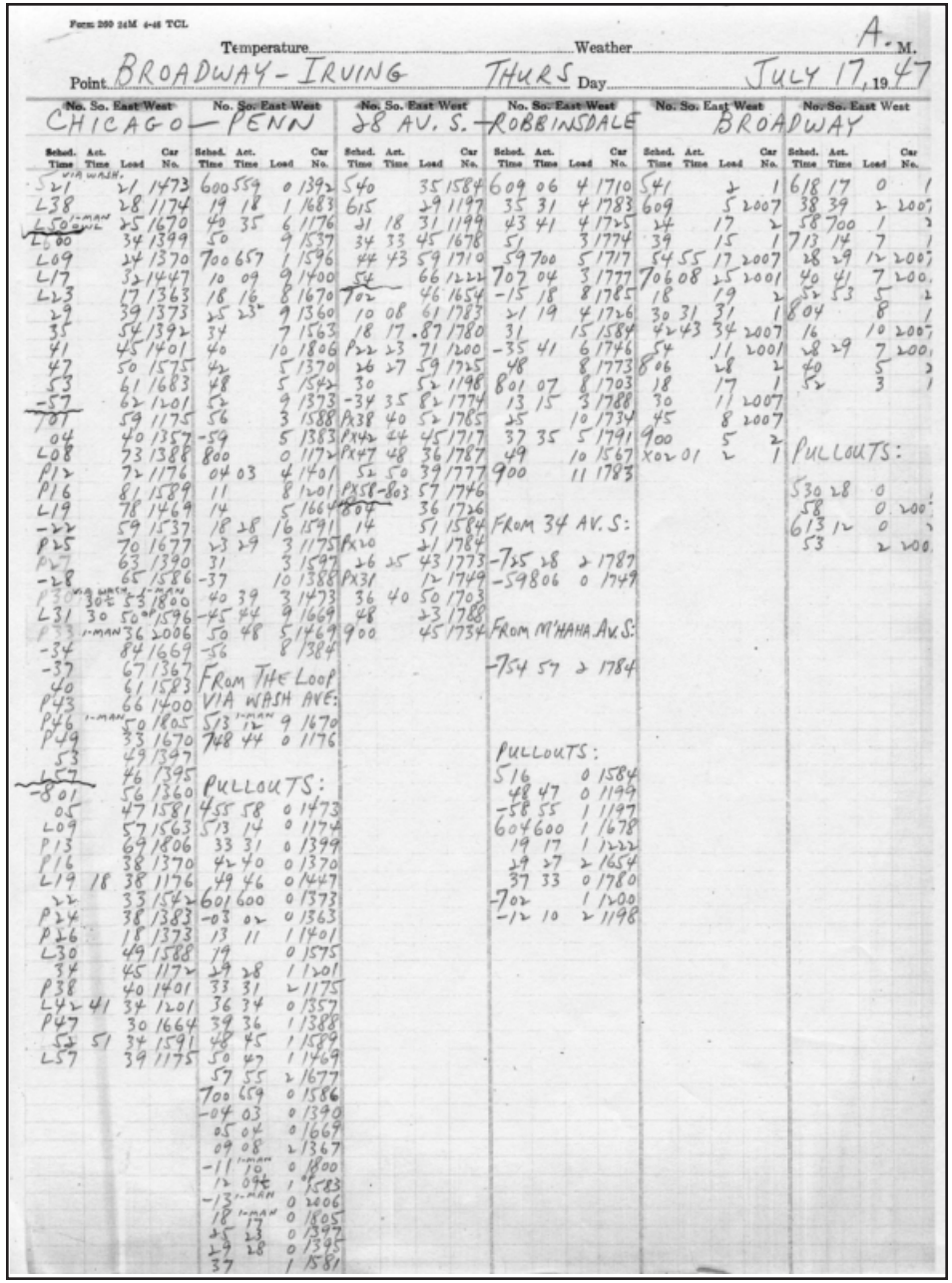
I recently spent some time at the Minnesota Historical Society getting reacquainted with the materials Russ Olson donated back in the 1980s. At the time there was no hint that MSM would ever establish a library, and he wanted them to be safeguarded and accessible to the public.

I came across two pieces of paper that were a pleasant surprise. Bear in mind that I'm an old Metro Transit route and schedule planner and love to wade into details that might put others to sleep, so bear with me.

The papers were a pair a of streetcar load checks taken by Ed Nelson in 1947 and 1954. You may recall the Summer 2017 issue of Twin City Lines was devoted to Ed and his obsession with all things streetcar.

TCRT took load checks at intersections along its lines to track on-time performance, spot overloads and refine schedules to meet demand. Most were taken at the "max load points" on the edge of downtown where the streetcars experienced their largest loads. Checkers didn't actually enter the car to count heads. They started with the assumption that a full seated load was 50, then estimated the actual load based on the number of empty seats or standees visible from outside the car. Not hard to do once you get used to it. The counts weren't exact, but were close enough for writing schedules.

TCRT employed several full time load checkers, and supervisors also checked loads when they weren't otherwise occupied. The 1918 TCRT Operating Department rulebook says that daytime max load checks should be taken every two days and evening/night checks every week.


Temperature Weather A. M.
Point BROADWAY-IRVING THURS Day JULY 17, 1947
CHICAGO—PENN 28 AV. S.—ROBBINSDALE BROADWAY
FROM THE LOOP VIA WASH AVE:
PULLOUTS:
FROM 34 AV. S:
FROM M'HAHA AV. S:
PULLOUTS:
PULLOUTS:

Knowing Ed, he wasn't on company business when he took these checks; he just wanted to record the numbers for himself.

Thursday July 17, 1947 5-9 AM

Even though the wartime traffic bubble was starting to ebb, almost 199 million rode that year. That's similar to

the early 1920s. The system was struggling to haul everyone, so this check gives a feel for that level of ridership.

Ed took the check at Broadway and Irving Avenue N., not a location normally used for a load check, and it certainly wasn't a max load point. He was watching three lines. Chicago-Penn would normally have been checked at 2nd Avenue North and Glenwood, the north edge of downtown, where the checker could also see Chicago-Fremont cars and the Glenwood-4th Avenue line. The Robbinsdale line would normally have been checked at Plymouth and Washington Avenue North, also the max load point for the Camden, Plymouth and North Emerson lines.

Because it was well before the max load count, the size of the loads is less than it would be farther down the line. Knowing that, it's extraordinary how heavy the loads are. Let's start with the Chicago-Penn line.

	5-6AM	6-7	7-8	8-9
Streetcars	1	4	5	5
Frequency	20	6	3	4
Total load	74	418	1255	665
Avg. load	25	42	60	42
Standing loads	0	3	14	3

Looking at these numbers, remember that the loads got even heavier between Irving Avenue and downtown. During the peak hour, every car probably had standees.

Here's the same table for the less busy Robbinsdale line.

	5-6AM	6-7	7-8	8-9
Streetcars	1	5	12	8
Frequency	60	12	5	7.5
Total load	35	230	687	281
Avg. load	35	46	57	35
Standing loads	0	2	7	1

The Broadway Crosstown

There was one additional line that passed through Broadway & Irving, the Broadway Crosstown. Irving was only a mile from the west end of the line at 19th Avenue (today's Golden Valley Road) and Upton Avenue. The Crosstown was always one of the lightest lines in the system. For that reason it was assigned lightweight streetcars, including cars 1 and 2, short lightweights built for the Stillwater local lines and favorites of Ed's. They were running that day.

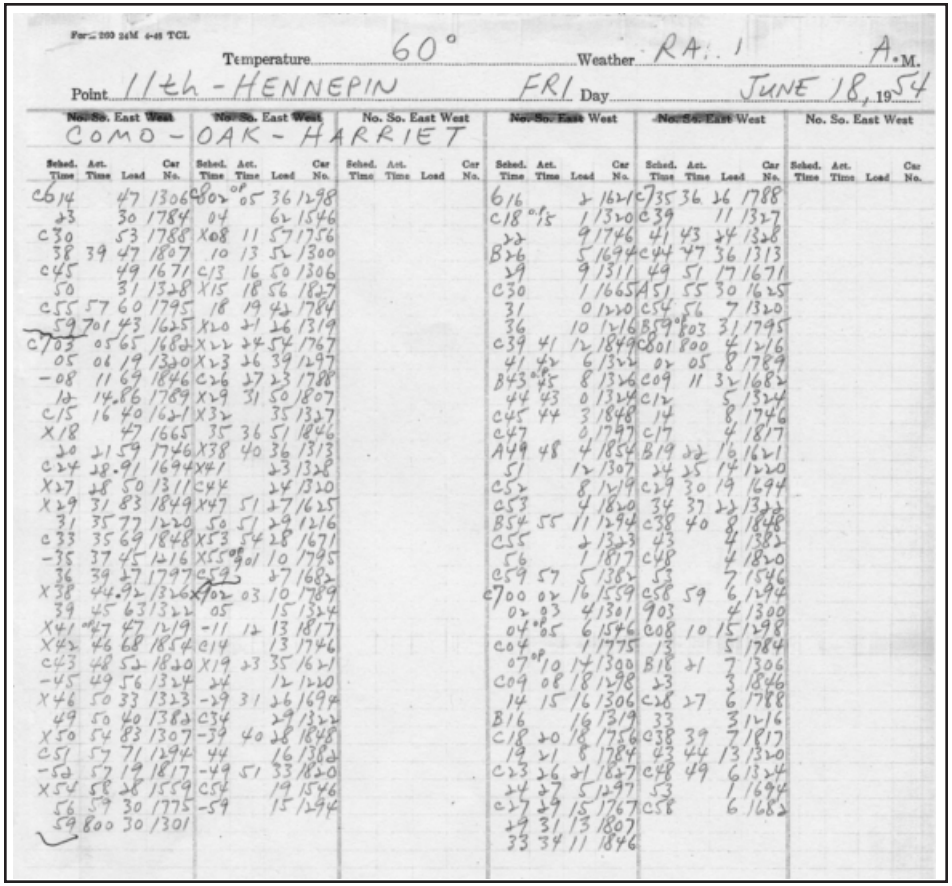
Although the Crosstown's numbers pale in comparison to the two big downtown routes, consider that the numbers in the next table were collected in a mere mile of track before reaching Irving. That's incredibly productive. Today's Broadway Crosstown averages about one passenger per route mile. It should be noted that many of these passenger were headed downtown and transferred at Broadway & Emerson.

	5-6AM	6-7	7-8	8-9
Streetcars	3	10	21	16
Frequency	20	6	3	4
Total load	2	54	120	69
Avg. load	2	14	24	14
Standing loads	0	0	0	0

Friday June 18, 1954 6-10 AM, the last day of streetcar service

Ed recorded the last morning rush hour before the streetcars were replaced by buses. He took the check at 11th and Hennepin, in front of the TCRT office building. The last two lines still running were the Como-Harriet and Oak-Harriet. They ran as a single service between 44th and Xerxes Avenue South and Dinkytown, before going their separate ways to Como and Eustis and Oak and Beacon SE.

Although total ridership into downtown was much diminished from the World War II years, it was still impressive. During the middle of the rush hour there was a streetcar every two minutes, and half of those cars carried standing loads.


Temperature 60° Weather RAIN A.M.
Point 11th - HENNEPIN FRI Day JUNE 18, 1954
COMO - OAK - HARRIET

	6-7AM	7-8	8-9	9-10
Streetcars	8	28	22	13
Frequency	7.5	2	3	6
Total load	360	1539	857	264
Avg. load	45	55	39	20
Standing loads	2	15	5	0

The end was 15 hours away and the streetcars were still working hard and getting it done.

Childhood streetcar memories

-Tom Rollo

Note: MSM member Tom Rollo of Milwaukee passed away last year. Back in 1979 he wrote an account of his recollections of TCRT streetcars as seen through the eyes of a five year old living near the Como-Harriet streetcar line in the Linden Hills area of Minneapolis from 1951 to 1955 during the final years of streetcar service. It was published in the Minnegazette in four parts. This is an edited version.

Time has passed since I last visited the Twin Cities, almost 25 years in fact

since I last set foot in the great state of Minnesota. The memory of the brief period my family lived there, however, is as vivid to me today as perhaps what happened two days or two weeks ago.

In the summer of 1951 my father received a job offer from a new company that located him in Minneapolis, bringing about a move from Evanston, Illinois, the city of my birth. I have never met anyone since from the Chicago area that did not have at least a passive interest in mass transit be it rubber-tired or steel-wheeled, and at the tender age of five, I was no exception. Evanston is a city that is divided in two at length by "the great wall of traction". My curiosity was aroused.

All at once Evanston became history. It was late afternoon on that summer day. Standing on the platform atop part of the great wall at the Chicago & Northwestern Davis Street station being seen off by passing North Shore Line locals, Chicago Transit Authority even more locals, the Northwestern locals behind steam. Even a two-unit RDC train passed. Then finally our carriage; the flagship, the "400" train to Minneapolis. Our seats were on the Lake Michigan side of the train. This was very fortunate; it permitted me to watch the North Shore Line pass in review.

Later that evening I was awakened by the bustle of other passengers putting away their magazines and gathering their luggage. Weary-eyed, I looked out the window. Below me was the glimmer of the Mississippi, ahead the lights of a strange new city, dotted with the orange-red neons of the many downtown hotels, towered over by a spire-like building with a strange new name . . . FOSHAY.

Once inside the Great Northern station, it was the usual clogged aisles as everyone made their way onto the platform. My dad was there waiting for us. We walked up through the cavernous waiting room and out between the teeth-like pillars into our waiting car.

The first day

Morning came very early. My father had some business calls to make. Mother and I went along to see this new city. Lots of lakes that you could see the other side of, a drug store on a street corner with a big parrot on the door, traffic lights at street intersections with bells, and above all else, the most delightful, majestic yellow street cars one could ever hope to see. They seemed to be everywhere and go everywhere. One was behind another on the same street; the first going straight ahead, the next pausing briefly then turning into a side street disappearing from sight. My curiosity was intense. Where were they all going? Well, in the remaining three years of the life of this system, I stopped at nothing to find out.

The next morning we decided to stop at our new home. Our furniture had not arrived from Evanston yet. We drove around the west side of Lake Calhoun and into Sheridan Avenue S., up several hills to 4039, a very substantial brick and stucco duplex. No sooner did the building come into view than a Gray Van Lines moving van came into sight from the other direction. Moving in day was here.

All of that commotion was too much for me. I asked if I could go outside and walk around for awhile. Mother agreed but made me promise not to go too far. Out the door I went to explore this new neighborhood.

I came to a street corner. I couldn't read words very well then, but I knew numbers pretty well. The street sign said W. 42nd Street. As I crossed W. 42nd Street, I could see another lake ahead of me. I didn't think it was the same one, since the other one, Lake Calhoun, didn't curve in this direction. Once across the street, the lake shore was in view.

What's this? A railroad crossing sign. A funny looking thing. It's too big and on the wrong side. There was a garland of three big black cables drooping over the crossing that didn't miss my eyes either. By the time I reached the bottom of the hill, I had decided that here indeed is where the streetcars ran.

In Chicago, streetcars always ran in the streets. The North Shore and the "L" ran off the street. But there was that spot in Wilmette on Greenleaf Avenue where the North Shore ran in the street. Well, I guess if the North Shore can run in the street there, then it was OK for streetcars not to.

Such a big station for streetcars, lots of windows and a covered platform. I walked across the street at the bottom of the hill spellbound by this new find. Under the roof were some benches. My dad and I used to go over to Isabella Street in Evanston to watch "L's" and North Shore trains so I guess it would be all right if I crossed the tracks and sat on a bench for awhile.

I ran across the tracks, ankles wobbling as my feet struck the uneven blocks that surrounded the rails in the crossing. I walked up to the door that led inside and looked through the screen. Inside were two refrigerated food coolers, more benches and behind the coolers was a very slender, older looking lady wearing a floral dress. I opened the door and went inside. The lady looked at me and asked if I wanted something. I said "no" and went outside and sat on a bench.

No sooner had I positioned myself on one of the benches then a very strange ghostlike whining sound was coming from overhead. To my left from around a very gradual curve appeared one of those great yellow streetcars. It came to a stop at the crossing. Then, with a gasp of air from the brakes and a groan, it proceeded through the crossing coming to a stop directly in front of me. The tall doors opened wide, turning slightly away from the entrance making the opening look a bit wider than it really was.

A man wearing a gray hat got off. The motorman looked down the steps of the car at me. I didn't move a muscle. Being this close to one of these great yellow streetcars was a frightening experience. I had been this close to elevated trains before but probably due to the high platforms they didn't seem quite so big. On its front was a large cowcatcher that looked somewhat like a minnow scoop.

The tall doors slid shut and with a groan the car began to move forward. As it gathered speed, I was amused by the holes in the wheels going around and around. The motion reminded me of the propeller-like device inside the glass bubble on a gas pump. Away it went disappearing into the trees in the distance. The man who got off walked to the end of the platform. He had something in his hand and he threw it to the ground It appeared to be a crumpled up blue piece of paper.

My attention was caught by the arrival of another streetcar from the other direction. This one came to a stop also. Nobody got on or off. Then it started through the crossing, gradually turning out of sight. I noticed something very strange at this point. There were stop signs there, facing into the streetcar tracks. I later found out from Mrs. Shipman (my nanny) why that was. She was a wonderful person; always interested in what I liked to do. She had many stories to tell about the streetcar line having spent her entire

life in southwest Minneapolis. By now I was a bit worried that I had been away too long.

I slid off the bench and walked along under the roof of the station. When I came to the street, the blue slip of paper that man in the gray hat threw away was there. I picked it up and unfolded it. It looked like a transfer or stopover or something. There was a big red number "51" in the middle of it. I put it in my pocket and started home, up the steep hill.

When I arrived home, the moving van had been completely unloaded. Upstairs there was a frenzy of activity; boxes, furniture, and carpets strewn all over. With all this activity my parents were unaware of how long I had been gone.

Later we stopped for dinner at the coffee shop in the Calhoun Beach Hotel. I pulled the blue transfer out of my pocket and showed it to my parents. I asked what it said in the middle through the red numbers. Mom looked at it and said, "Como and Oak Harriet." Well, I now knew the name of the streetcar line. Both mom and dad promised we would go on a ride soon. Less than a week later we did and that was the first of many to follow.

I led the way all the way to trackside. Mom was expecting to get on in the Upton shopping district, but I explained the newly discovered station at Lake Harriet was much better. Our destination today was only as far as Lake and Hennepin. Not much of a ride really, but nevertheless an event to be remembered.

Once at the station, Mom wanted to be sure of the right streetcar in the right direction so we went into the station to ask. Before Mom had asked the complete question, the lady interrupted in a nasal, almost annoyed voice, "Any one that goes by here, on this side, any one at all", with index finger extended moving her hand back and forth in the direction of the tracks. We thanked her and walked outside.

There it was, ride number one. I stepped up and had the shiny metal stanchion in the middle of the entrance not been there, I would have had considerable trouble with the first step. Mom was right behind me, but needless to say I had to be the first aboard. So intent on finding a window seat I tripped on the step up into the car and fell flat on my face. There was a seat next to an open window on the gate side. I slid over the smooth rattan to the window sill. The tall door leaves folded shut and we were on our way.

The car began to move growing speed rapidly. The groan of the motors below grew steadily in pitch and at one point as the car gained speed, every pane of glass inside the car vibrated in harmony with the sound of the motors. Lake Harriet disappeared into the trees as did Queen Avenue behind the iron railing.

The car began to sway gently, the motion became even more noticeable as the car passed through a gentle 'S' curve. Just a bit further we rounded another curve and passed beneath a large limestone bridge. The opening seemed so low that I felt we wouldn't fit under it. Beyond the bridge there was a very gradual curve and Lake Calhoun came into view as did two rather large haystacks being used as archery targets.

On the right there appeared a beautiful very rolling, heavily wooded cemetery. All the while, the whine of the motors below the car played a tune that changed pitch momentarily each time the wheels passed over a joint. I looked out the front window and just ahead there appeared to be a small trestle.

When the car passed over it, I looked down at its edges which were visible from the window. It was just a trough made of boards. I looked skyward through the upper sash and began following the sag of the three feeder cables that were suspended overhead. Just beyond the trestle a large tree leaned out into the path of the cables. Rather than cut the tree down, TCRT installed a Western Union bracket to change the position of the cable to avoid the obstruction.

Ahead, the tracks turned very gradually following the direction of Richfield Road and the shore of Lake Calhoun. The track ahead looked as though it was passing through the nave of a great arbor cathedral. I looked around the inside of the streetcar. The motorman had a stool to sit on, but never used it. Instead, he preferred to stand the entire trip. There was the fare box next to him. It was a bit shorter than those I had seen before and had a hand crank on the side. There were the usual advertising cards up and down the sides above the windows and leather straps which swung to and fro as the car rocked along.

The cemetery came to an end as the car rumbled over a bridge. There ahead was another 'S' curve. Lake Calhoun appeared on the left over a high bluff. On the right above us were the back yards of homes. This plateau lasted only a short while before a crossing came into view ahead. The motorman took his hand away from the controller and the car coasted toward the crossing. The crisp note of the gong rang out and we proceeded through the crossing paying heed to none. This was literally a streetcar alley; backyards and garages right up against the right-of-way.

Ahead was a curve and a long waiting platform. The car slowed down to a near stop, but didn't. The dark red pavement in 31st Street was now in view. The sounds of motors, brakes, and compressor were now joined by the deep rumbles of trucks on street trackage. It was fun watching the splashes of yellow reflecting from the windows in the houses along the street. The car stopped at 31st and Hennepin to pick up two passengers. Then it turned the corner into Hennepin. There ahead was the end of the line, for now anyway.

After we got off, I glanced up and was amazed at the intricate net of trolley wire overhead. My appreciation for the intricacy of overhead construction began to develop while in Minneapolis. I have never experienced anything quite like it in any other system since. Curve construction particularly; never too many pull offs nor too few, and something I feel is unique to the TCRT system, the use of porcelain strain insulators attached directly to the eyelets of single and double yoke curve hangers. Most other systems around the country placed the insulators in the pull-off span or used "hickory stick" insulators. Most of us can easily identify a system by its rolling stock. For me, it's not only that, but the overhead system as well.

In a week or so following this day, Mrs. Shipman came to stay with me. I told her about the first trip on the Como-Harriet, the handsome station, and those strange stop signs facing into the tracks. She told the story of the time when she was very young and a near catastrophe that occurred at 42nd and Queen. It was a Sunday in the winter of 1911. She and her family were returning home from a service at Linden Hills Congregational Church in a horse drawn sleigh. Her brother had the reins and while descending the hill, lost control of the horse. Unable to stop, the horse sleigh with its passengers darted out in front of an eastbound streetcar. The streetcar struck the rear of the sleigh and had it

not been for the very icy conditions, much more damage could have resulted. As it was, the car pushed the sleigh sideways onto the station platform and only a few broken pieces of wainscot resulted. This, together with several similar incidents before this one, led to TCRT establishing the policy that all cars in either direction must be brought to a complete stop before crossing 42nd Street. This was apparently little hardship on operations since there was almost always someone waiting to get on or off.

At all other crossings east of France Avenue the relationship was similar to that of two autos approaching an unmarked intersection at the same time. West of Xerxes and east of France, the crossings were equipped with wood crossbuck signs except at York and Zenith which had only yellow stop signs. Beyond France, the crossing signs were used, now with stop signs mounted in the center of the lantern shelf facing more appropriately toward the street. The oversized one at 42nd Street was the only one like it on the line.

Mrs. Shipman also told me of the many weekends that she and her family spent at Minnetonka. They looked forward most of all to the ride back home. In those days, the southeast corner of the Lake Harriet Station was a fully-equipped ice cream parlor complete with bentwood furniture and uniformed attendants. The family always took time out for a sweet treat.

From early childhood until the time we lived in Minnesota, I was a chronic asthmatic. Medical science had developed a series of inoculations which taken three times a week for three years would cure the problem. The program required visiting clinics downtown and on Sunnyside Road in Morningside on the schedule. Needless to say, there was only one way to get to either spot, the Como-Harriet. After a few trips with Mom, I had the routine down pat and I was on my own. Now the fun started.

Most parents usually have considerable trouble getting their children into a doctor's office. Mine were no exception, at least until Minneapolis. By the early 1950s medical science had developed a series of injections which, when taken over a period of years, would cure an allergy problem. These shots were administered at a doctor's office in the Rand (now Dain) Tower in downtown Minneapolis and at a clinic on Sunnyside Road in suburban Morningside. Wouldn't you know the best way to get to both places was the Como-Harriet. Once started, this went on for three years. In fact the allergy shots outlasted the streetcars. It was during these thrice weekly trips that a real traction "nut" was born.

The westbound trips were the most enjoyable although by far shorter than others. There is always a single incident that has caused all of us to have the interest in traction that we do. For me it was the trackage behind St. Thomas School between Upton and Xerxes. The concrete wall provided a splendid sounding board for the wonderful sounds of traction. Since there was always a stop at Upton, the wall provided excellent sound of the car accelerating.

I began taking small notebooks with me. The purpose of this, in true railfan fashion, was to record the numbers of cars I had ridden on. Although many of the pages have been lost, there are some interesting things among those pages that survived. The number that appears most frequently is 1707.

I recorded a car that achieved fame, #1166. The oldest operating car in the fleet, it made the last scheduled trip before abandonment. I had walked over from the clinic in Morningside to the loop at 44th and France. There it was, doors closed. The motorman had vanished, I imagine, to telephone into the dispatcher. It had rained very hard while I was in the clinic. The rain streaming down the side of the car had carried rivulets of chalky yellow paint that made a very distinct line on the ground beneath the car. This was a steel-sided car and the bold TCRT logo had a chalky film on it too. It was now that I learned how to manually open the two door leaves by operating the rod on the front of the car. On the ride that followed, I never dreamed I was riding on what was by then TCRT's oldest car.

A short time afterwards, (August 11, 1952) the trackage on France Av. S. was abandoned. This didn't seem too unrealistic since the condition of the pavement was terrible except for one stretch on France between 49th and 51st Streets. This was concrete and in very good condition. The streetcar was replaced by a shuttle bus; always a larger, clumsy Mack. On repeated incidents thereafter, TCRT displayed the streetcar's "inflexibility" in traffic.

The bus laid over at the west end of the loop at the curb alongside the service station on the northeast corner of 44th and France. The bus driver always parked the bus just far enough back so that its rump stuck out into the westbound track. Needless to say, this prevented Como-Hopkins cars from passing. If the motorman of this one stopped too far back, he too would block the crossover preventing a Como-Harriet car in the loop from starting its journey back downtown. This was by no means an isolated incident. Between the fall of 1952 and the summer of 1954 it happened over and over again.

One other entry in my notebook was particularly amusing. It reads like this; "To St. Paul New L doors." It took some time studying The Electric Railways of Minnesota to figure out what it was I had written. This was car No. 299. The trip was on University Avenue. New meant a PCC. L doors referred to the door operation which unlike the balance of the PCC fleet more closely resembled the articulated maroon and silver units then on permanent service on the elevated through Evanston, Illinois to Wilmette.

Each of us I'm sure have packed away in our memories a favorite ride. I'm no exception. Mine was a complete south side circle and involved the following routes; Como-Harriet, Selby-Lake, Ft. Snelling-North Washington, Plymouth-E. 25th Street, 38th Street, and Bryant to 54th-Penn, and finally Oak-Harriet. The transfer colors were blue, green, pink, purple, blue, orange, blue in that order.

If the Selby-Lake motorman was in a good mood he, when asked, would give you a handful of expired transfers to add to your collection. The Selby-Lake cars were the best by far for this since so many routes crossed its path. If you were really lucky you could make the trip on one fare. The transfer privilege was so set up that someone living on any southside location could travel to any other southside location on one fare using downtown and crosstown cars and buses.

My last ride on a streetcar is perhaps the most vivid memory of all. It was a warm summer day on June 16, 1954. The Minneapolis school system at that time was releasing its classes in mid-June and today was the last day. I had ridden to Eustis Street and Brookside loop the weekend before and although that in itself would have been a satisfactory "last ride", there had to be one more.

Continued on page 20.

CHSL in color--Uptown to France Avenue

Now that we can do more color, here's a photo tour our piece of the Como-Harriet line, and then some. This was the most photographed section of the entire TCRT system.

Top left: A downtown-bound car on 31st Street at Humboldt Avenue. Vernon Langdon photo.
Bottom left: Crossing 32nd Street on the alley trackage between Irving and James. Vernon Langdon photo.
Above: Turning from 31st Street into the alley trackage that extended to 34th Street. Ken Royer photo.
Below: Crossing the bridge over 36th Street. Ken Royer photo.

Above: Above: The view north from the Berry Road bridge looks different today because Lakewood cemetery took over the right of way and our tracks now curve to the left. Ken Royer photo.
Below: The Cottage City stop. North Star Chapter, NRHS collection.

Above: A 1949 Minnesota Railfans special to Hopkins meets a northbound car at 42nd Street. Look how clean that car is. George Krambles photo.

Below: PCC cars only served the Como-Harriet and Oak-Harriet from 1952 to 1953. Sandy Goodrick photo.

How it would look if we could turn PCC 322 at the north end of the line. George Krambles photo.

Above: A northbound PCC makes the mandatory stop before crossing 42nd Street. Ray De Groote photo.
Below: The view from the Linden Hills Boulevard bridge, behind the CHSL carbarn. George Krambles photo.

Above: The retaining wall along Queen Avenue was built in 1916. Sandy Goodrick photo.

Below: An Oak-Harriet car leaves the 44th Street right of way at Xerxes Avenue.

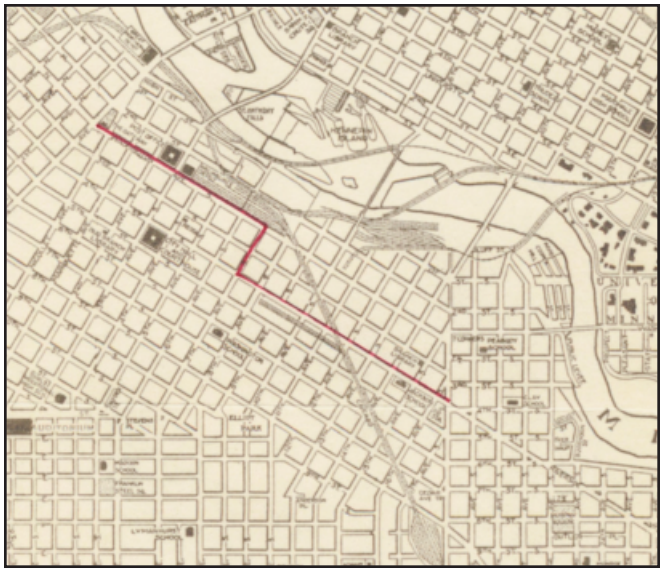
Looking west from Drew Avenue toward 44th and France. Bob Mehlenbeck photo.

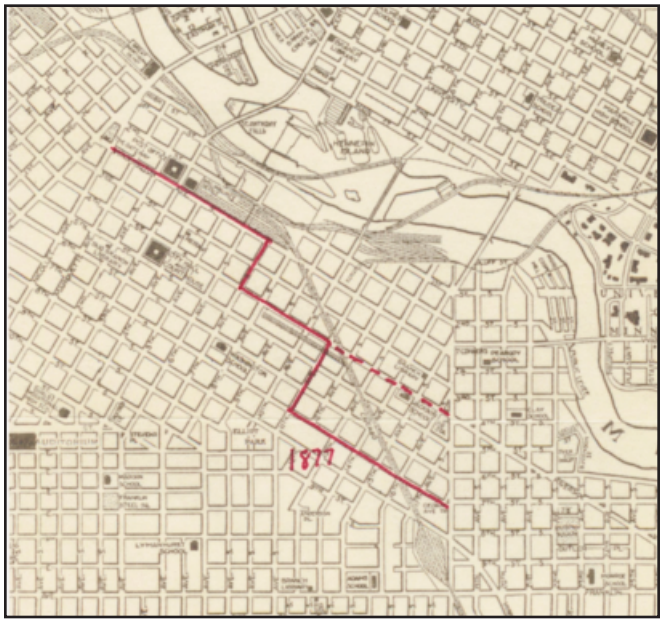
Above: Looking east from Drew Avenue at the right of way along 44th Street.

Below: A motorman relaxes during his layover on the 44th and France loop.

The Cedar-Riverside shuffle

The Minneapolis Street Railway had a terrible time finding the right combination of routes to served the Cedar-Riverside and Seward neighborhoods southeast of downtown Minneapolis. Lines were built, only to disappear in a couple of years, then reappear later. This gets very complex, so here is a series of maps to break it down year by year. It started during the horsecar era. Not all lines are shown.



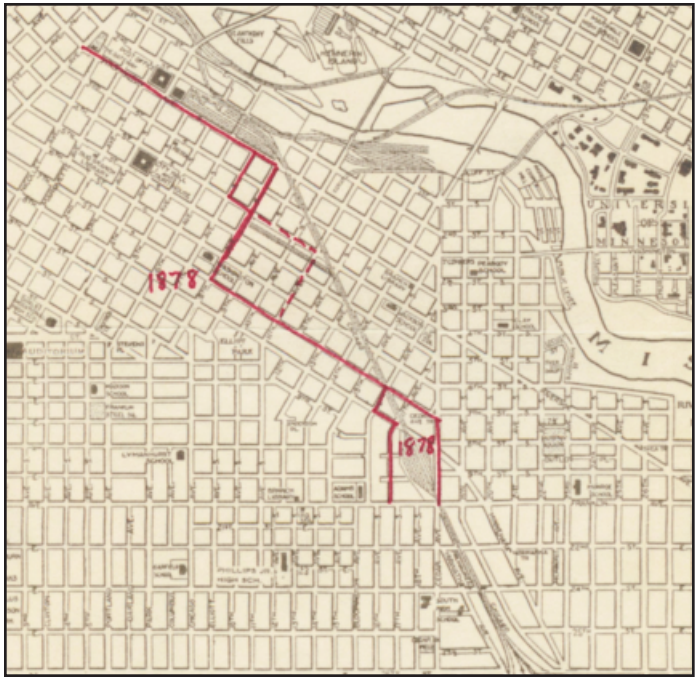


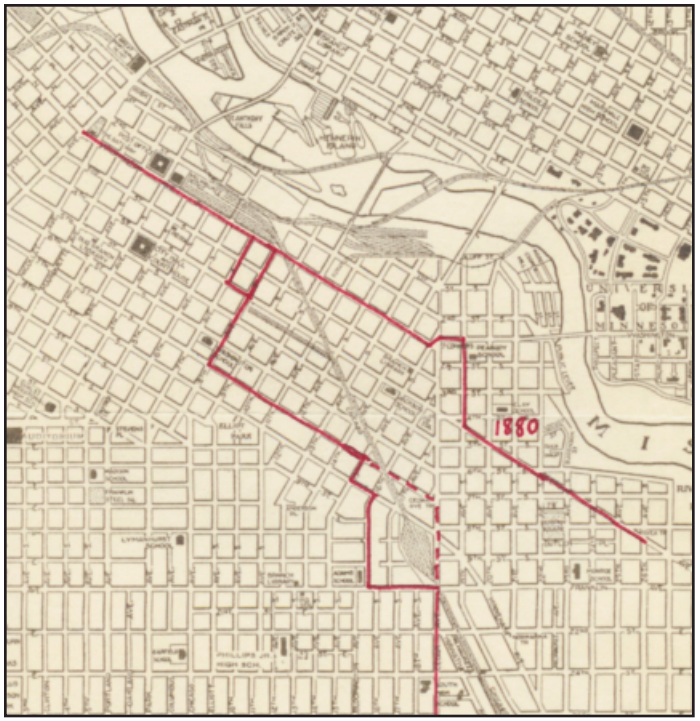
Left top: In 1875 the city's second horsecar line reached the corner of Cedar and Riverside.

Left bottom: An ongoing issue was where to cross the Milwaukee Road. In 1877 the crossing moved from 4th Street to 7th Street.

Opposite left top: 1878 saw a reroute from 11th Ave. S. to 8th Ave. S. to avoid crossing an industrial spur.

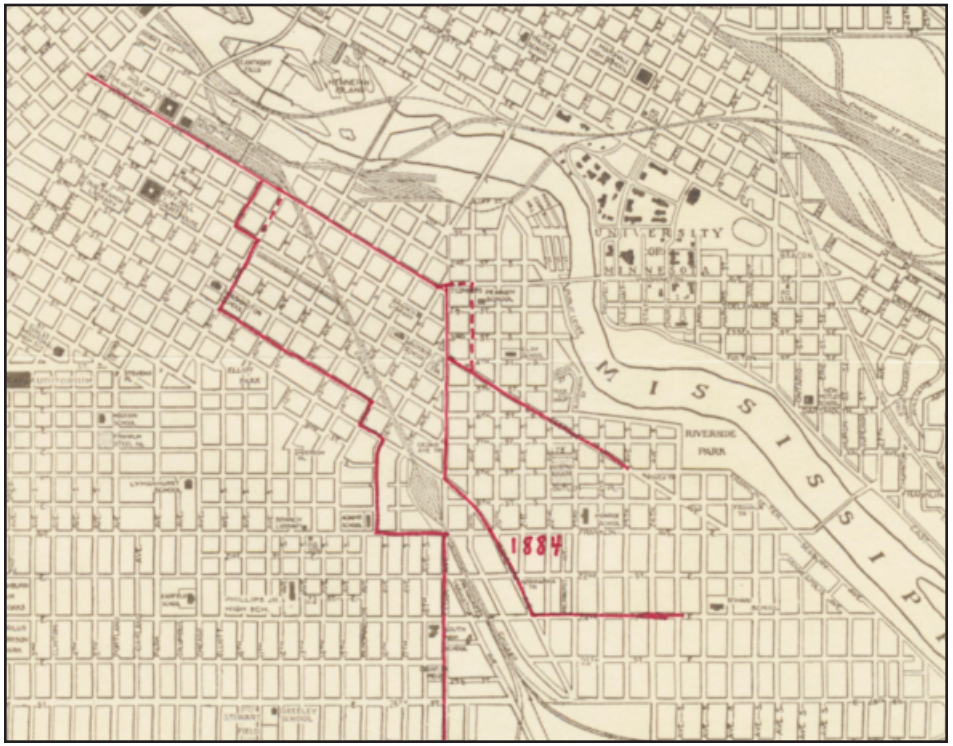
Opposite left bottom: 1880--The new line down Cedar Avenue would have meant two crossings of the Milwaukee Road at 7th Street and Franklin. The reroute via 16th & Franklin avoided both.

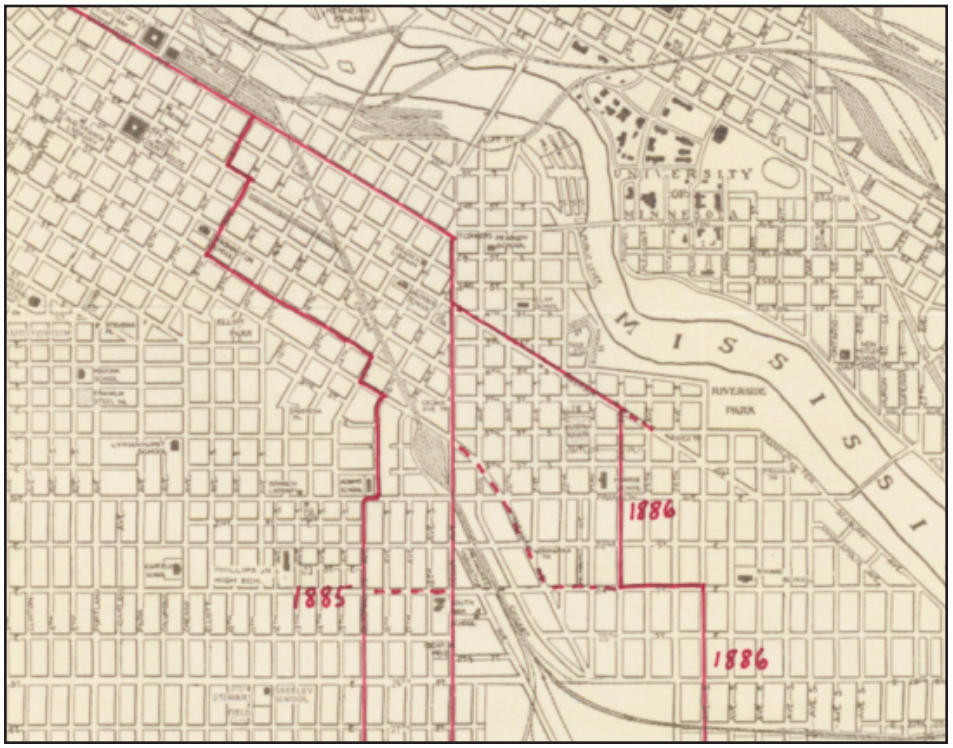


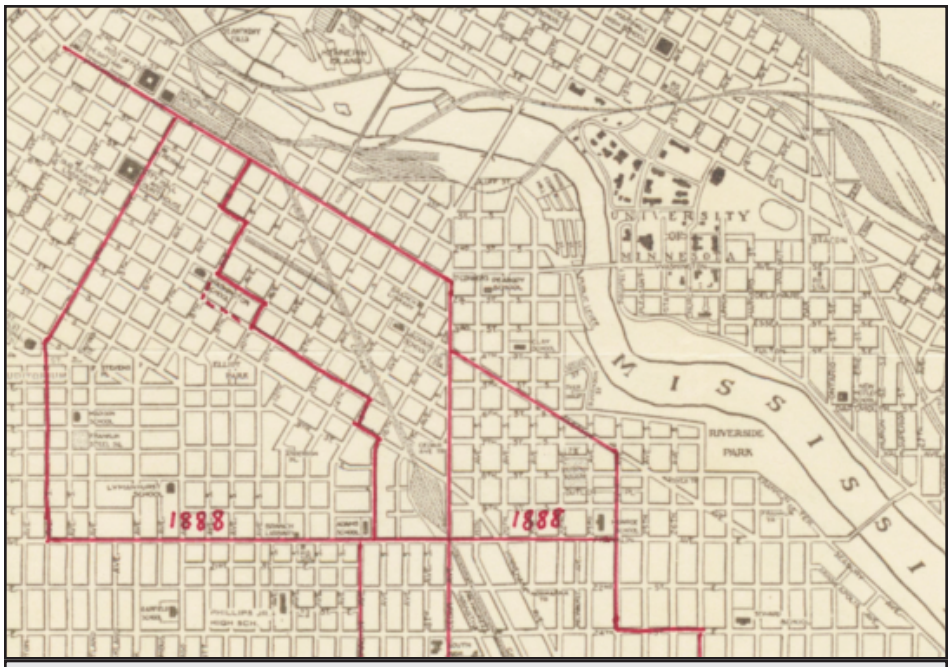


Top right: 1884--The Riverside Avenue line shifted from 19th Avenue to Cedar to share track with the new extension down Cedar and east on 24th Street.

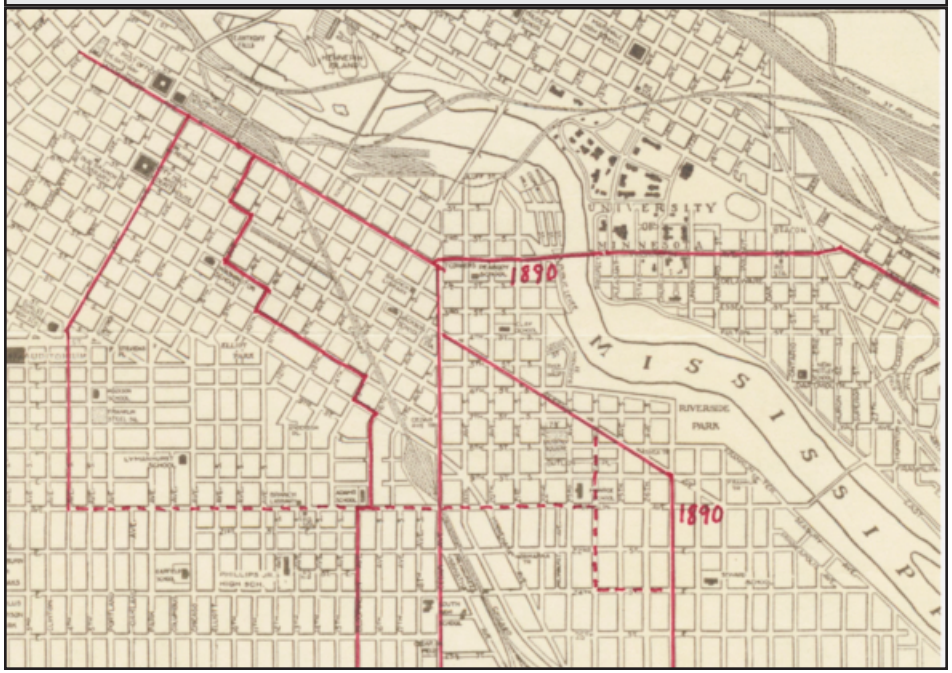
Bottom right: 1885 saw the extension out Bloomington Avenue. In 1886 the Cedar Avenue line was extended across Franklin, causing the Franklin track to be abandoned between Cedar and Bloomington. The Riverside line took over part of the 24th Street trackage and extended out 27th Avenue S.

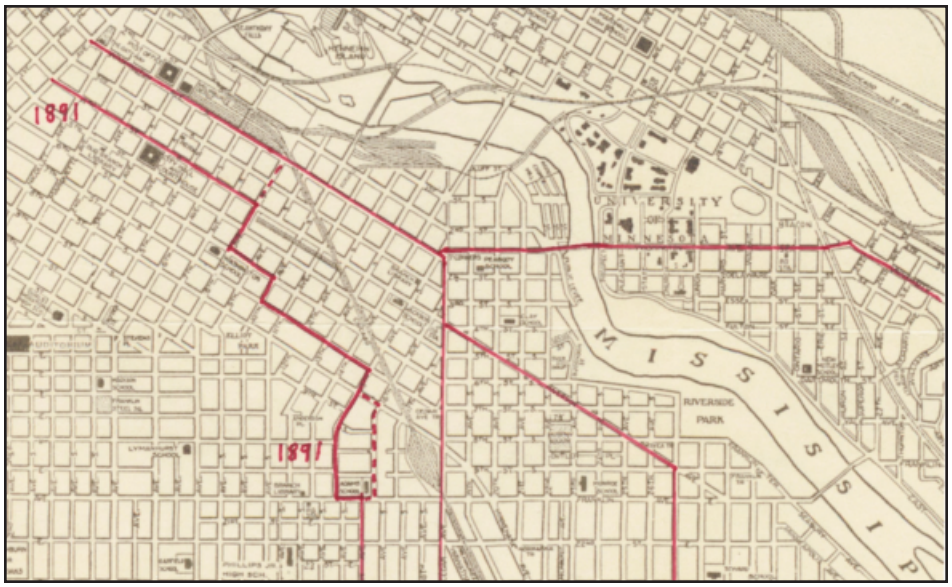




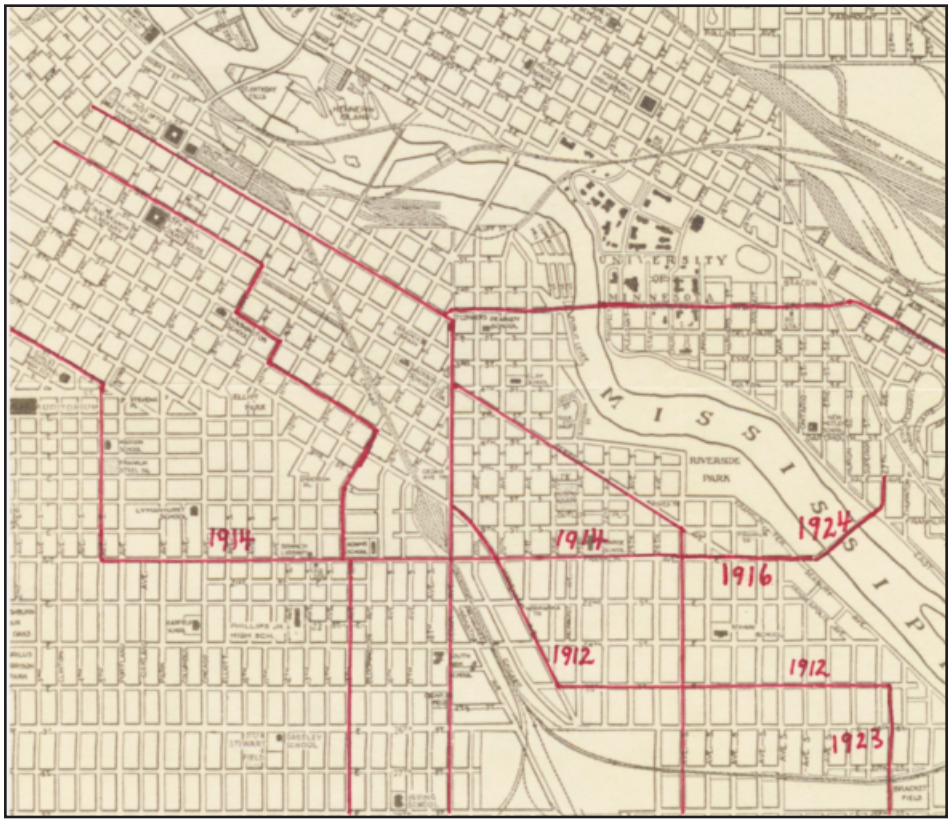


Above: 1888 saw a minor reroute on the east edge of downtown. The big news was a new line across Franklin Avenue from 4th Avenue S. to 24th Avenue S.
Below: 1890 brought the first phase of electrification, including opening the Interurban to St. Paul on Washington Avenue. The Riverside line was electrified and rerouted via 27th Avenue, its final configuration. After only two years, the track on Franklin was removed.





Above: 1891--electrification was completed on the Cedar Avenue and Bloomington Avenue lines. Bloomington was rerouted via 15th Avenue, eliminating two turns.
Below: The final configuration. The East 25th Street line was built in 1912 and extended in 1923, and Franklin Avenue reappeared in 1914-1916, crossing the river in 1924.



Franklin & Cedar

As the maps on the previous pages show, TCRT had an on-again, off-again relationship with the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Cedar Avenue. That's because the Milwaukee Road's busy track between the downtown depot and the Southtown yard and shop complex passed diagonally through the intersection.

In addition to passenger and freight trains, there were numerous switching moves in and out of the coach yard, located just north of Franklin. The opportunities to delay streetcars were many.

Streetcars made the north-south crossing of the tracks on Cedar from 1891 to 1950. The Franklin Avenue line crossed them on the east-west axis from 1914 to 1940. Starting in 1926, Cedar Avenue hosted two lines. 34th Avenue S. cars ran straight through on Cedar. 28th Avenue S. cars turned west at Franklin, taking 4th Avenue S. into downtown. They didn't actually cross the Milwaukee Road, but were still frequently delayed by it.

It took awhile, but TCRT eventually vacated the troublesome intersection, almost. The Franklin line was abandoned in 1940. In 1950 the 28th and 34th Avenue lines were sort of combined, still being called 34th Avenue. The Cedar track crossing was eliminated between Lake Street and Minnehaha Avenue, just north of the Milwaukee Road. The streetcars used Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue to reach Franklin, avoiding Franklin and Cedar altogether.

It appears that move coincided with the Minnesota Highway Department grade separating Franklin and the Milwaukee Road and diverting and grade separating Cedar, an arrangement that remains in place today.

These 1948 Minnesota Highway Department photos capture the traffic delays caused by train traffic that passed diagonally across the intersection of Franklin and Cedar. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

These two photos date from about 1914. This view looks east on Franklin across Cedar and the Milwaukee Road tracks. A Franklin Avenue car to downtown Minneapolis is in the distance. The crossing gates are manually operated from the tower at left which was staffed around the clock. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

This is the companion view looking north on Cedar. The streetcars had to cross six railroad tracks plus the single track of the other streetcar line. The Milwaukee Road coach yard, now the site of the Blue Line LRT yard and shop, is at left. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Above: A northbound 28th Avenue car turns from Cedar onto Franklin, thereby avoiding the railroad tracks. 34th Avenue cars continued straight ahead, crossing the railroad on a single track. TCRT had to maintain the crossing and having only one track was cheaper. Note the electrified wire mesh surrounding the overhead wire, allowing the streetcar to clear the crossing even if the pole dewired.

Below: This is after abandonment of the Cedar Avenue crossing. Note that the street is blocked beyond the tracks, anticipating the Cedar rerouting and grade separation.

Continued from page 8

Our landlord's daughter and friend, Marna Peik, accompanied me on the final trip. We arrived at 42nd Street and Queen Avenue South in the late afternoon. The sun was beginning to set. The old distorted glass in the station house windows gave off uneven reflections. Not only was the sun setting on this day but on this mode of transportation passing directly in front of us.

The destination today was 50th and Penn, not much of a ride really, but considering the time of day and date it seemed appropriate. While we waited a heavy-set lady and her three children walked up and she asked "How much does it cost to ride on this thing?" I was a bit taken aback by such a question. How could anyone refer to the best streetcar line on the world's greatest street railway system as "a thing." There probably was a lot of this sort of thing going on this week; people going on their last ride and in this case, doubtless the first and last.

I explained the three destinations that could be reached from this stop and the fares for all ages. Toward the end of the explanation a westbound streetcar came, stopped at the stop sign, and proceeded through the crossing. Just then I turned around, having finished my explanation, only to look up at the side of the streetcar and there was Oak-Harriet looking down at me.

I jumped up and down several times waving my arms in complete surprise having missed the streetcar. It rolled to a stop about 15 feet beyond the crossing and the rear doors opened. Ah, the motorman saw me. We ran across 42nd Street and boarded through the rear door. I looked up to the front of the car and saw the reflection of the motorman's eyes in the rear view mirror. I could tell he was smiling - the crows feet were turned up.

I ran up to the front of the car and dropped two dimes into the fare box. The motorman said, "I thought you wanted to get on." I recognized him right away. He was a very nice old man with snow white hair that stuck out from around the edge of his cap. I had ridden with him many times before and we sort of knew each other but never knew names. I recall getting on his streetcar at 44th and France on several of the many trips to Morningside. Sometimes in the summer there was a popcorn wagon there and during the layover he always bought a bag to nibble on and share with his young passenger.

The streetcar now underway turned under the Linden Hills bridge past the small waiting platform that was never used and pulled up next to the toy store at Upton causing every window in the building to vibrate. Next at Xerxes, the car rolled to a perfect stop in proper alignment with the switch. A Como-Harriet or Como-Hopkins car preceded ours so it was necessary to change the switch position. The motorman's many years of experience was in evidence since he with one hand leaned over and changed the switch position without having to fumble with the controller and the reversing switch like so many of his coworkers.

Another passenger rang the bell to get off at 46th Street. This was on a slight hill so it took some extra braking power to stop the car. The deafening squeal of the brakes gave evidence to the fact that the streetcar was operating on borrowed time.

The last passenger got off at 50th and Penn and I quickly ran up to drop another 20 cents into the fare box. The traffic was extremely heavy on 50th. We waited a very long time before finally backing into the wye. What this amounted to now really was a right

turn from the left lane. Can you imagine that now? A traffic engineer would never approve of that.

The cancer of abandonment was visibly close. The trolley wire had been cut off just south of the intersection (the line to 54th and Penn had been abandoned on November 28, 1953). There was the wire above us, a beautifully constructed TCRT curve that started nowhere and ended nowhere. The little block signal on Penn just south of 50th that protected the single track on Penn was now dark having outlived its usefulness.

With all in readiness for backing, we stood with the motorman on the rear platform. He stood there waiting patiently for a break in traffic and said, "Pretty soon there will be no more Oak-Harriet car." I didn't say anything. What could I say? He flipped the start switch then momentarily looked skyward to make certain the trolley rope was starting to lean in the right direction. His concern led me to believe that there must have been an occasional problem with the frog at this point.

This intersection was a fine example of everything TCRT had to offer in the way of trackage and overhead. 50th Street was concrete pavement with concrete line poles from Bryant to Xerxes instead of the usual capped metal poles. The wye and the single track on Penn were both blacktop around the rails. The short section of double track on Penn was of block pavement.

Almost at once we were on our way again. The car rounded the tight curve onto 50th Street with its usual grace. At 50th and Xerxes I walked up and asked the motorman what the wye at this location was for. He said it was only used in rush hours in recent years. None of the crew liked to use it because it was built backwards. The streetcar had to pull into the wye nose first and then back around into traffic.

There was a woman waiting with that "I want to get on" body language at 44th Street. The motorman turned around to switch on the car lights since it was dark enough under the canopy of elms. I leaned out the window as the car turned onto the right-of-way. There was a sewer below me; the one that about a year before backed up flooding the track which resulted in a shorted out PCC backing up traffic.

The motorman applied the power a bit early as we coasted through the switch. A blue flash came from the trolley wheel as it passed through the frog and could be seen in reflections from the glaze of the feeder cable insulators above.

The car pulled up to Lake Harriet Station and we thanked the motorman. The streetcar pulled out, its red tail light disappeared into the Glen. The station was closed for the evening, and the lights were on under the canopy. Everything seemed so normal just as it had been for the years before.

Two days later I rode by bicycle to a spot next to the line pole behind the hardware store at Upton. The streetcars came and went loaded with rush hour passengers. The following morning I awoke to a very hot, overcast day. My bedroom window was wide open and from Sheridan Avenue came the sound of a General Motors diesel engine. That really did it.

In all of our childhoods there are firsts. The first time I went downtown by myself - the first state capital I visited - the first state fair - the first observatory - all of these firsts were aboard the Como-Harriet, back when you could go when you please and when going was as much fun as getting there.

Midtown Greenway streetcar interruptions

For the past year Minneapolis has been experiencing inconvenience because of I-35W's reconstruction. The period 1912-1916 saw a comparable disruption across south Minneapolis as the Milwaukee Road excavated the 29th Street depression, known now as the Midtown Greenway.

To back up a little, the Milwaukee Road's Hastings & Dakota Division crossed south Minneapolis at grade next to 29th Street. From Cedar Avenue to Hennepin Avenue were 39 grade crossings. The railroad had to provide 24/7 manual crossing protection, at least at the seven arterial streets with streetcar lines. The others were probably protected only by crossbucks, creating numerous opportunities for collisions. The city imposed a 6 mph speed limit on the trains, causing delays to be longer as trains interrupted traffic, including streetcars. Not the least of the civic complaints was the need to whistle for every crossing. There were 16 of them per mile, meaning trains had to whistle continuously.

Therefore it's not surprising that the city mandated that the line be grade separated. Although a major capital expense for the railroad, grade separation would pay for itself in reduced operating and liability costs.

The construction began in 1912 and progressed from west to east. Hennepin Avenue already bridged the tracks, so the Como-Harriet, Oak-Harriet, Hopkins, Lake Minnetonka, Deephaven and St. Louis Park lines were not impacted.

The TCRT Schedule Department record books in the Russell L. Olson Library contain the exact dates that streetcar service was interrupted, how it was handled and when through service resumed.

7-25-12 The Bryant Avenue line on Lyndale was severed. Cars from downtown terminated at a temporary wye at 28th & Lyndale. The southern end of the line detoured via Lake Street to Nicollet Avenue to downtown. A temporary bridge was built on Lyndale and through service returned on 8-8-12.

4-24-13 The Bryant line was cut again. This time passengers from the downtown car walked across the railroad to a shuttle car to complete the trip.

4-25-14 The Nicollet and Grand Avenue lines on Nicollet were severed. Cars from downtown wyed out at 29th Street. Shuttle cars from the south wyed at Elroy, a short street that paralleled the south edge of the railroad. A temporary bridge was built on Nicollet and through service resumed on 6-13-14.

6-29-14 The 4th Avenue line was severed. Cars from downtown turned on a temporary wye at 28th Street and backed down to the railroad. Shuttle cars from the south used the existing wye at Lake Street and backed down to the railroad. On 8-10-14 a temporary bypass track was laid through the construction area. It was used until the new bridge opened on 6-19-15.

5-3-15 The Chicago Avenue line was severed. Cars from downtown turned on a temporary wye just north of 29th Street. Shuttle cars from the south used the existing wye at Lake Street and backed down to the railroad.

4-24-16 The Bloomington Avenue line was severed, presumably with the same sort of arrangement as Chicago Avenue. Service resumed on 7-20-16.

6-1-16 The Cedar Avenue line was severed. Service resumed on 9-22-16.

Above: This 1914 photo is the only known view of a blurred freight train on the 29th Street corridor crossing a streetcar line at grade. In this case it's Bloomington Avenue. Note the work car on the other side of the tracks.
Below left: The 29th Street Depression, as it was called, looking west at about 11th Avenue. The Sears store rises at left. John Barriger photo, St. Louis Mercantile Library collection.
Below right: The 4th Avenue bridge over the depression was the longest. A northbound 4th Avenue car crosses it. Bob Schumacher photo.

Almost preserved

The following Minneapolis Tribune article from 1921 describes the plight of what was purported to be the city's first electric car. It was parked at the U of M, waiting to be part of a museum that never happened. The news story, written 42 years after the first electrics appeared, gets some facts wrong. It incorrectly describes the first the car as running on the line to Dinkytown, rather than the 4th Avenue line. Other corrections are in italics.

Parked on the University of Minnesota, campus, awaiting the building of a big museum to shelter it, the first electric street car run on a Minneapolis track is exposed to rain and snow, while generation after generation of students have glanced at it and wondered if the university authorities were planning to establish a hamburger stand.

The history of the faded, forlorn car dates back to Christmas eve, 1889 when it made its first run through the old Bridge Square, while Minneapolitans of the day thronged the sidewalk. The stage was set in the afternoon.

The late Henry Mosseau, driver of a horse car for five years, guided his horse over the old route for the last time about 3 p. m. He washed the car down for the last time, groomed his horse, and hurried back to Bridge Square to see the new electric car.

Car Creates Wonder.

At Bridge Square a huge iron post 150 feet high surmounted by eight arc lights was an attempt of the city fathers to light all Minneapolis by artificial moonlight. Eight o'clock found the sidewalks packed. Wagons and sleds which would be obstacles to the coming electric car were moved to side streets. Among the people gathered were three Indian squaws who had been selling baskets all day in the square.

The thin cables strung above the streets were the object of much speculation. The crowd gazed and doubted whether power sufficient to run a street car could be transmitted from such a thin wire. Shouts from Nicollet Island turned their attention to the approaching car.

It was crossing the bridge, accompanied by a shouting mass of Minneapolitans who had gone to meet it, Under the "artificial moonlight" the new paint on the car's aide glistened. Its red and green lights sparkled as it passed proudly down Hennepin to Washington avenue.

Electric street cars were here to stay. The route of that first car, the only line in Minneapolis at the time, was from Fourteenth avenue southeast up Fourth street to Central avenue, now East Hennepin, thence across the Hennepin avenue bridge and to Washington avenue, with the terminal at Fourth and Washington north. A "Y" for turning was unknown and an old-fashioned turntable was used. Forty cars of the first type were ordered and operated.

Later when five lines were operated a pole with the various destinations marked on its sides was carried at the front end of the car. Improvements in the new cars over the old horse cars included greater speed, use of guard gates, enclosed vestibules for the motormen *(that actually didn't happen until after 1893)* and the use of trucks for the wheels. The cars were heated by stoves in the center like the horse car predecessors.

The most modern feature of the electric car's appearance was the car cards display in gaudy colors around the top of the inside.

The coming of the electric cars also called for new rails to supersede the old ones with iron strips nailed to the top of wooden rails. The new ones were of solid iron. Two men to operate the cars were another innovation with the coming of the electric cars *(no, horsecars got conductors in the late 1880s)*. A passenger desiring to alight waved a signal to the conductor who pulled a bell as signal to the motorman. It was a wonderful improvement, Minneapolitans of the time declared.

Rotting From Exposure.

But the old car has lost its glory now. It is rotting from dampness and exposure back of the electrical engineering building at the university. Snow drifts on its top and birds have built their nests under its deck. Its one hope is the erection of a great university museum, where it will rest in state.

The horse cars which preceded the electric palaces on wheels were radically different from the passenger carriers of Minneapolis now, according to a veteran member of the university faculty who witnessed their passing. They were 13 feet long, carried 15 passengers and were mounted on four light wheels fastened directly to the body of the car. The whole weight of the car was only 1,000 pounds

Passengers were supposed to drop fares in a box at the front end of the car, directly behind the driver-motorman-conductor. Those who neglected to drop the necessary fare were noisily reminded of the duty by a bell which the driver rang. A bell attached to the neck of the horse-motor jangled with the jogging of the horse and warned traffic and prospective passengers that the car was coming. The driver was unprotected from snow, rain or wintry winds. Inside straw, several inches deep, aided the half-hearted stove in dispensing warmth, and straw on the garments of Minneapolis pedestrians was not the mark of a "hay seed," but of the plutocratic car rider.

The pioneer car on the campus. The U of M armory is visible in the distance.

It seemed appropriate to end a Winter issue with a winter scene. In 1927 an eastbound Como-Harriet car on the Como Park right of way passes under Lexington Avenue.

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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August 2021

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